EPA Yosemite Slough Site Update

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA • April 2021

Background

In 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund program chose a cleanup plan for the Yosemite Creek Sediment site (also known as Yosemite Slough). The site is in southeast San Francisco, Calif. This fact sheet covers:

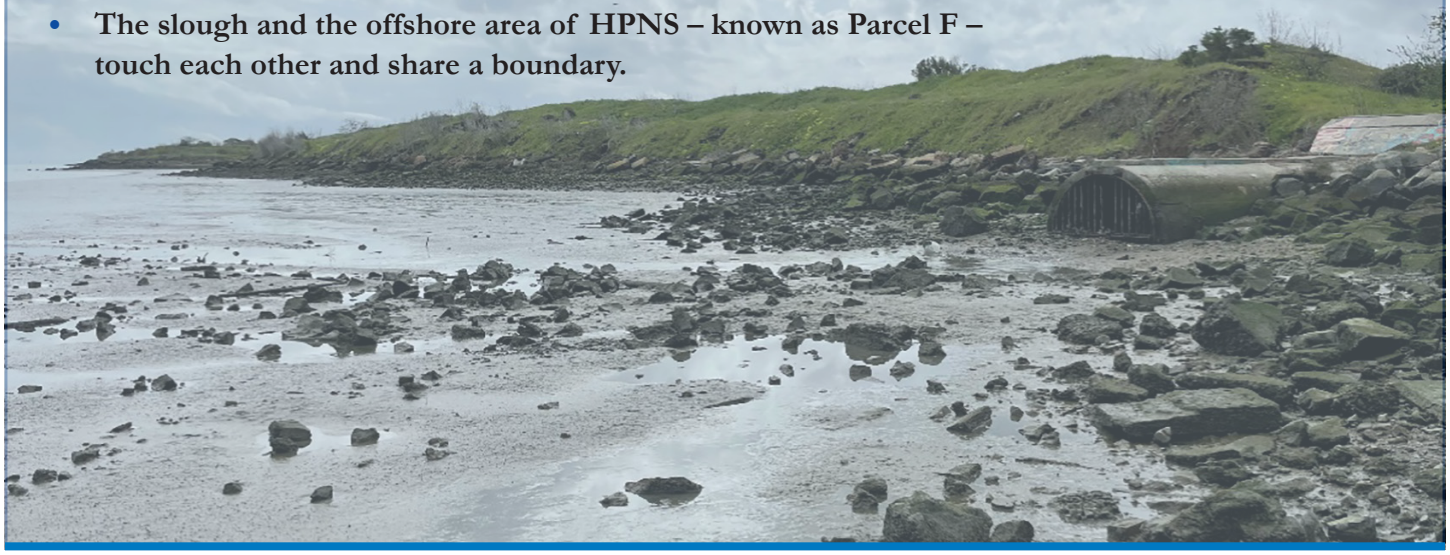
- work already done,
- a minor change to the 2014 cleanup plan to make it more effective, and
- next steps for the site.

Summary of Changes to Cleanup Plan

Our original cleanup plan from 2014 would remove pollution from Yosemite Slough. We would dig out some of the polluted mud in the slough and replace it with clean materials. The new change to the plan will add more clean material to other areas of the slough. When the cleanup is done, humans, animals, and plants will be better protected from pollution at the site. EPA has not started this cleanup yet. A legal agreement with one or more parties will be needed for cleanup to start.

The site at a glance:

- **Shallow water channel**
- **About 1,600 feet long and 400 feet wide**
- **Found between Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (HPNS) (a separate EPA Superfund site) and Candlestick Point**
- **At low tide, mud in much of the channel is uncovered. At high tide, the mud is covered with three to six feet of water. The mud is called sediment.**
- **The slough and the offshore area of HPNS – known as Parcel F – touch each other and share a boundary.**



How Did the Site Get Polluted?

Between 1940 and 1970, much of the Yosemite Slough's perimeter was filled to create more useable land. This was done with materials like soil, crushed rock, construction materials and other waste. Before the 1980s, stormwater carried sewage into the slough. The fill materials, sewage and nearby industrial activity polluted the slough with a mix of harmful chemicals. These chemicals included poly-chlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and lead (see box to the right). As a result, the site's sediments are harmful to humans, animals and plants that contact or eat them.

Where do PCBs and Lead Come From?

Materials like electrical transformers, oils and caulking used to have **PCBs** in them. PCBs shield heat and prevent fires from starting. While PCBs were banned from being made or sold in the United States after 1979, they stay in the environment for a long time.

Manufacturers used to add **lead** to household paints to make them more durable. They would also add lead to gasoline to improve vehicle performance. While lead is hardly used in paint and gasoline anymore, it is still used in car batteries, plumbing materials and ammunition.

How is the Cleanup Plan Being Changed?

When we chose how to clean up the site in 2014, a cleanup goal was set for PCBs. In the last several years, new science has become available. We used this science and examples of cleanup plans for other nearby sites to see how we could improve the cleanup plan for Yosemite Slough. In February 2021, we issued our review of the cleanup plan in a document called a Technical Memorandum.

To see a copy of our Technical Memorandum, please visit:
https://semspub.epa.gov/work/09/100023289.pdf

Our review showed that adding more clean materials in other areas of the site would:

- speed up natural processes that help clean up the site,
- improve the quality of the cleanup, and
- better protect humans, animals and plants from pollution in the slough.

While this change will raise the cleanup cost by about two percent, it would be a significant improvement to the speed and effectiveness of the cleanup.

What's Happening Now?

Seven more studies are in progress to help design the cleanup plan. We expect these seven studies will be done in 2023.

Next Steps

- Complete the change to the cleanup plan. We will document this change with a memorandum that we will put on our website (www.epa.gov/superfund/yosemite-slough).
- Use information from all the studies to draft a cleanup plan design by 2024. We will use the draft design to make the final design. The final design will have engineering drawings and details.
- Coordinate the cleanup plan for Yosemite Slough with the cleanup plan the U.S. Navy is developing for Parcel F of the Hunters Point Superfund site.
- Continue work to get the parties who polluted the slough to pay for and do the cleanup. (A legal agreement with one or more parties will be needed for cleanup to start.)

What Other Work Has Been Done?

When we chose a cleanup plan for Yosemite Slough in 2014, we noted more studies were needed. These studies would provide important information to design a better cleanup.

As such, we worked with parties connected with the site to finish four studies since 2016:

➢Site Boundary Study
– updates the physical boundary of the site above and below the waterline to see where cleanup needs to happen and what obstacles are present

➢Odor Potential Study
– evaluates and estimates potential odors that might be created when sediment is removed from the slough as part of the future cleanup

➢Treatment Area Study
– determines if land near the slough could be used for activities that are part of cleaning up sediment from the slough

➢Outfall Study
– gathers information about the water that comes out of the sewer system and goes into the slough

*The studies above are found on our website: www.epa.gov/superfund/yosemite-slough

Yosemite Creek Sediment Site Update

For More Information

Site Webpage: www.epa.gov/superfund/yosemite-slough

Site Information Repository – Holds copies of current information on the site cleanup, technical reports, and other materials for free public browsing:

Superfund Records Center
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
75 Hawthorne Street, Room 3110
San Francisco, CA 94105
General Phone: (415) 947-8717
Please call for current hours of operation.

Yosemite Slough

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